



2006 BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Central Montana Fire Zone
Aviation Operations Plan
(Malta and Lewistown Field Office)

**BLM Montana Central Fire Zone
Aviation Operations Plan
2006**

Updated by: Robert A. Bahr Date: 3/03/06

Approved by: /s/ Gary Kirpach, Zone FMO Date: 3/3/06

Approved by: <u>/s/ Robert A. Bahr</u> Date: 3/3/06 Unit Aviation Manager
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I. General Information.

1.1 Purpose/Policy.

The purpose of this plan is to ensure that all Central Zone Air Operations are carried out in the safest and most economical manner possible. This operating plan is supplemental to the Bureau 9400 Manual, Departmental Manual 350-354, and the Montana State BLM Aviation Plan.

1.2 Objectives.

The Central Zone Aviation Management Program provides aviation management direction to ensure that, through the use of aircraft, the Zone Area mission is Accomplished Safely and Efficiently. The Program embraces a philosophy that sound management practices, including high personnel standards, can reduce risks inherent in aviation.

1.3 Authority.

This plan is authorized by BLM Manual 9400, paragraph .33. As a supplement to the Montana State BLM Aviation Plan, it conforms to all Bureau and Departmental aviation policy.

1.4 Responsibility.

The Field Manager's have the overall responsibility for all aviation operations in their respective fields of the Central Zone. The Zone Fire Management Officer delegates the Zone Aviation Manager duties to the Assistant Fire Management Officer. Operational authority is delegated to the Helitack Manager, Assistant Helitack Manager, Aviation Dispatcher and the Dispatch Center Manager. No other personnel are authorized to procure, contract, or charge aircraft, unless delegated authority.

Field Managers	- located in Lewistown and Malta
Fire Management Officer	- located in Lewistown (FIRE)
Assistant FMO/UAO	- located in Lewistown (FIRE)
Helitack Manager/Assistant	- located in Lewistown (FIRE)
Dispatch Center Manager	- located in Lewistown (FIRE)
Aviation Dispatcher	- located in Lewistown (FIRE)

II. General Administration.

2.1 Zone Aviation Administration.

The Zone Aviation Manager (or delegated) is responsible for:

1. Ensuring aviation operations in the Central Zone comply with DOI and Bureau policy and regulations.
2. Managing the aviation management program to meet all Field Office objectives.
3. Developing assigned personnel to meet local aviation position requirements through training and experience.
4. Developing, updating, and implementing a Lewistown Zone Aviation Plan Supplement.
5. Serving as a Project Inspector on aviation contracts.
6. Maintaining Aviation Program Manuals, Handbooks, and Guides.
7. Planning, scheduling, and conducting reviews of the Zone Aviation Program including training and qualifications of aviation personnel.
8. Procuring, contracting, or charging aircraft for approved non-fire flights and fire flights.

The Aviation dispatchers are responsible for:

1. Procuring rental aircraft for local administrative, fire and resource flights.
2. Providing flight following and initiating emergency/SAR procedures when necessary.
3. Maintaining documentation files on each flight, aviation vendors, training and qualifications records, pilot flight/duty records, etc....
4. Providing flight invoices including Special Use plans (Plans may be done by the Aviation Manager).
5. Compiling annual Aviation Statistical Summaries.
6. Developing and updating Aviation Incident/Accident Response Plan and local Aerial Hazard Map.

2.2 Aircraft Acquisition.

1. Flight Requests.

All requests for non-fire flights should be made at a **minimum of 14 working days** lead time. All requests for flights should be made to the Aviation Manager or Aviation Dispatcher. The individual(s) requesting the flight will complete the Aircraft Service Request Form (attachment 1). All non-fire flights must be approved by the appropriate Field Area Manager.

All attempts will be made to find the most suitable and economical aircraft available for all approved flight requests.

2. Corporate, Military, or State Aircraft.

The use of corporate, military, or state aircraft will be requested through the Zone Aviation Manager or Aviation Dispatcher with the completed form MT-9400-1a (attachment 2). This request must be approved by the State Aviation Manager and requires **at least 2 weeks lead time** for final approval.

3. Interagency Flights.

Joint flights with other agencies are requested through the Aviation Manager or Aviation Dispatcher with the form, 9400-1a, blocks 1, 2, and 6, (attach. 2).

4. Procurement.

a. All commercial aviation services required by the BLM shall be acquired through a procurement process of the National Business Center (NBC), Aviation Management Directorate (AMD). See 353 DM 1, 2, and 6 for more details.

b. The aviation services provided to the BLM shall be documented on a Aircraft Use Report, form OAS-23. **OAS-23's will be sent to Lewistown Dispatch for review & signature then forwarded on for payment.**

III. Aviation Operations.

3.1 Purpose

This section sets forth the policy governing the Central Zone BLM Aviation operations. Standard flight operating procedures assure that planning, procedures, and evaluations support strict internal controls, safety, cost effective operations, compliance with laws, and the directives of senior authority. All aviation operations will follow the appropriate BLM, Department and interagency guidelines.

3.2 Operational Procedures.

1. Manager Requirements.

All flights will require at least one trained and approved Flight Manager/Chief-of-party to be on board. The Flight Manager's duties are outlined in the Pilot/Flight Manager's Checklist, (attachment 3). A helicopter manager will be assigned to the project as necessary (special use flights, unimproved heliports, other complex operations); aviation manager will do a risk analysis prior to approving the project.

All helicopter flights must have a load calculation completed prior to take off. One copy must be left with ground personnel if possible. In all cases, the pilot is the final authority on flight operations.

2. Airstrips and Heliports.

There are 49 approved BLM airstrips and heliports in the Central Zone. A complete list of these airstrips and heliports including condition, length, and elevation is posted in the Lewistown Fire Dispatch Aircraft Request Log.

3.3 Flight Dispatch.

1. Pre-flight Actions/Flight Plans.

1. All Central Zone BLM flights shall be approved using an Aircraft Request/Flight Schedule Form, 9400-1a. Special-Use/Fire flights are exempt provided a pre-approved plan is in place, such as Initial Attack Plans, Shift Plans, etc.
Special-Use Plans shall be developed in accordance with 351 DM 1.7.

All persons aboard special-use flights shall be pre-approved in the Special-Use

Plan.

Special-Use Flight Planning Requirements

- Type of aircraft needed for mission.
- Logistical support needs - needs to support mission.
- Mission objectives.
- Hazard map review - identify area of operation and hazards.
- Pre-flight briefing - pilot, crew, and ground crew.
- Post-flight debriefing - pilot, crew, and ground crew.

The Flight Manager/Chief-of-Party is responsible to contact the flight following agency to report any deviations from the original flight plan. **Any deviations are to include present location, altitude, direction, and next destination.**

2. Radio Requirements.

All aircraft operations within the Central Zone will be equipped with a radio capable of operating on:

- a. Zone Dispatch Frequencies (**Simplex 168.225**)

167.825 Tx 168.225 Rx Tx Tone 167.9.

- b. Flight Following Frequency

168.650 Simplex

- c. Guard (**Simplex 168.625 Tx Tone 110.9**)

All aircraft operating within the Central Zone must meet the minimal standards for aircraft equipment, 351 DM 2. It is recommended that all flights flown carry an additional handheld radio and a GPS unit for emergency communication purposes.

3. Flight Following.

Flight following is the knowledge of the aircraft location and condition

with a reasonable degree of certitude such that, in the event of a mishap, the survivors may be rescued. The planned flight following procedure will be documented on the Form 9400-1a. Flight following shall be performed via one or more of the following methods:

1. An Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) flight plan for point-to-point flights specifically requesting FAA flight following.
2. A Visual Flight Rules (VFR) FAA flight plan. **Flight plan must be closed out upon arrival.**
3. Flights which are not from a designated airport to an airport and all special-use flights will be required to flight follow through Fire Dispatch. Flight following through the Lewistown Fire Dispatch will require check-ins to be made just prior to take-off and landing and every 15 minutes. During each check-in the aircraft will report its present location by latitude/longitude, VOR, or geographical location. The check-in will also include heading and direction. This information is to be recorded in the Dispatch Log. It will be the Flight Manager and the Aviation Dispatcher's responsibilities to assure that actual check-ins are being made.
4. Automated Flight Following (AFF). Dispatch will confirm aircraft status every 15 minutes and document in dispatch log. **AFF is the preferred method if aircraft is equipped.**

4. **Overdue Aircraft.**

a. **Immediately Overdue (Upon missed check-in).**

The dispatcher will initiate a radio search, attempting radio contact, at least every five minutes, until the aircraft is located or declared lost. The dispatcher will also contact the destination, if possible, to see if the aircraft has landed. The dispatcher will reconfirm the last check-in time and location. The dispatcher will also complete the Overdue aircraft info sheet in the **Aviation Incident/Accident Response Guide.**

b. **15 Minutes Overdue (FMO & Duty Officer notified).**

At 15 minutes overdue, the dispatcher will contact the originating dispatch and air base and any airports or sites en route.

c. **30 Minutes Overdue.**

At 30 minutes overdue, the dispatcher will contact the vendor's

home base for any possible information. The nearest FAA Flight Service Station will also be contacted to see if the aircraft has checked in, landed, or otherwise heard from.

d. **45 minutes overdue.**

At 45 minutes overdue, notify the Zone Aviation Manager, the State Aviation Manager, and Field Manager. Based on fuel duration and last known information on aircraft a decision will be made as to declaring the aircraft missing and proceeding with search and rescue (SAR) guidelines.

e. **Missing Aircraft.**

When an aircraft is declared missing, Search and Rescue procedures outlined in the **Aviation Incident/Accident Response Guide** will be followed.

The basic actions in order of priority are:

1. **Initiate Search and Rescue Plan. (Contact closest sheriff's office to location of possible incident)**
2. **Notify Field Manager**
3. **Notify Field Office Safety Officer**
4. **State Aviation Manager and Zone Aviation Manager should already be involved in the action.**

f. **Confirmed Aircraft Accident.**

For a confirmed aircraft accident:

1. **Initiate plan from the Aviation Incident/Accident Response Guide.**
2. **Notify State Aviation Manager.**
3. **Notify Field Office Safety Officer.**
4. **Notify Field Office Manager.**

The Field Office Manager (or Acting) will be the Only one authorized to notify next of kin.

Request/Consider ordering a Critical Incident Stress Team.

5. Airspace Coordination.

The Central Zone BLM is responsible for air traffic coordination over an incident or complex aerial project (i.e. fire or law enforcement) when a temporary flight restriction is in effect.

Airspace guides (military and interagency) will be followed when deconflicting air space and operating in military training routes (MTR's) or military operation areas (MOA's).

6. Temporary Flight Restrictions.

TFR's will be requested through the appropriate dispatch channels.

Lewistown Temporary Flight Restriction Procedures:

- a. Fire or Project requests a TFR.
- b. Dispatch fills out Request for Deconfliction worksheet.
- c. Form is sent to the aircraft desk at the Northern Rockies Coordination Center (NRCC).

3.4 Aviation Equipment.

1. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

It is the BLM Aviation Policy that on all Special-use missions, both rotary and fixed wing, personal protective equipment will be worn in accordance with BLM Manual 9400. This equipment is available through the Zone fire warehouse.

Special-use personal protective equipment will be in accordance with the ALSE handbook (Aviation Life Support Equipment). Basic requirements include leather boots which cover the ankles, flight suit (nomex clothes acceptable), nomex gloves (leather is acceptable), and an approved flight helmet (see **DM** and **Memorandums** for exceptions). See ALSE guide for exceptions to PPE requirements.

3.5 Special-Use Aviation Fire Flights.

1. Hazard Maps.

Before initiating any flight, a check of the Zone Area hazard map must be made to identify Military Training Routes, power lines, etc. This information is available through Fire Dispatch and must be included in the pre-flight briefing.

2. Wildfire Detection Flights.

Wildfire detection flights are a multiple annual occurrences. These are non point- to-point (Special-Use) flights, done at a minimum elevation of 500 feet AGL or more AGL. These flights will be termed Air Patrol Reconnaissance (Recon). Only trained aerial observers will be used and will be considered flight managers. An Air Patrol Kit is available through the Fire Dispatch. No plan or 9400-1a will be required as these are regarded as fire flights.

3. Air Attack Flights.

Air Attack fire flights are a multiple annual occurrence. These are non point-to-point flights. Only qualified air attack personnel will be used for these flights. Flight paths will be documented and flight following procedures will be followed. No plan or 9400-1a will be required as these are regarded as fire flights.

4. Helitack Flights.

Helitack flights are a multiple annual occurrence. These flights include: initial attack and support flights, and may include personnel transport, sling loads, bucket work, and aerial firing. These are usually non point-to-point flights and may be conducted at any altitude. All flights are under the control of or supervised by a qualified Helicopter Manager/Helitack Crew Supervisor or designee. No plan or 9400-1a will be required as these are regarded as fire flights, unless the flight is a non-fire mission.

4. Single Engine Air Tanker Flights (SEAT)

Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT) fire flights are a multiple annual occurrence. These are non point-to-point flights. Only carded pilots and aircraft will be used for these flights. Flight paths will be documented and flight following procedures will be followed. No plan or 9400-1a will be required as these are regarded as fire flights.

IV. Aviation Training.

4.1 The Aviation Managers, FMO and Zone Training Officer are responsible for

identifying and training all personnel involved with aviation in the Central Zone.

- 4.2 Zone fire crews will be given Helicopter Safety Training annually.
- 4.3 Basic Aviation Safety/Chief-of-Party & M-3 training will be held throughout the Central Zone for non-fire personnel as needed.

V. Aviation Safety.

5.1 Aircraft Accident Prevention.

The Bureau Safety Program comprises the BLM aviation directives system, aircraft accident prevention plans, risk management procedures, the distribution of accident/incident reports and information, and aviation safety education and training.

- 1. Lewistown Dispatch will maintain records of individuals qualified to perform aviation duties, including all aviation safety education and training provided to employees.
- 2. Lewistown Dispatch will maintain an aircraft Pre-Accident Plan ("Aviation Incident/Accident Response Guide") which will be updated annually.

5.2 Mishap Reporting.

Mishap reporting and procedures differ from aircraft accidents and other types of reportable incidents. All BLM offices shall comply with the provisions of 352 DM 6 and the Aviation Mishap Notification, Investigation, and Reporting Handbook.

- 1. Aircraft Accident.
Any employee involved in, or witnessed to, an aircraft accident, or incident involving injuries, shall, if able, perform these duties in the following order:
 - a. Take necessary action to rescue the survivors.
 - b. Take necessary action to secure and protect the mishap site.
 - c. Notify the NBC-AMD by the most expeditious means.
 - d. Initiate required administrative notifications:
 - Aviation Manager

- Zone FMO
- State Aviation Manager
- Field Area Manager

2. Aircraft Incident, Hazard, or Maintenance Deficiency.

Any employee involved in, or witness to, an aircraft incident, hazard, or maintenance deficiency shall, if able:

- a. Remove all persons from immediate danger who may be injured or jeopardized by the situation.
- b. Stop work in progress or request a supervisor stop work until the situation is corrected.
- c. Report the situation to the SAM, OAS, and Safety and Training Officer using the SAFECOM form.

3. Imminent Danger.

When an individual believes that an unsafe act, condition, or practice exists which has the potential to cause death or serious injury, he/she will immediately remove all affected persons from danger and stop work until the problem is rectified. Then inform a supervisor, and reported the problem on a SAFECOM form.

5.3 Aviation Mishap Information System (AMIS) SAFECOM.

See 352 DM 6. Information obtained from a **SAFECOM** form or other sources which may be useful for accident prevention purposes shall be analyzed and disseminated to all field offices. The report is for the purpose of accident prevention.

1. Confidentiality.

No one may provide the names of victims of serious injuries or death to anyone other than the Field Office Manager or Acting Manager.

2. Disclosure of Information.

The NBC-AMD is the only office of the DOI with authority to release information from accident/incident reports. No person may release

accident/incident information to the public without the concurrence of the NBC-AMD.

3. Reporting Criteria.

- a. All aircraft accidents shall be reported.
- b. Immediate notification will first be made to NBC-AMD by the most expeditious means. The 24-hour number for an OAS service and an investigator is located in the Pre-Accident Plan. Telephone **1-888-4MISHAP**.
- c. Notification to BLM management shall be made in accordance with BLM Manual Section 1112.23.
- d. Incidents involving any unintended, unplanned, or irresponsible occurrence which results in, or could result in, property damage, work interference, liability claim, or any combination of these, shall be reported.
- e. A SAFECOM form should be sent to the NBC-AMD Safety Office, the BLM Aviation Safety and Training Manager, and to the State Aviation Manager (SAM). The reporting individual is encouraged to sign the form however the form may be submitted anonymously.
- e. A DI-134 shall be submitted in accordance with Bureau Manual Section 1112.23 or 485 DM 5. See Manual 9400, .83, C.6.

